

# 3.1 THE EARLIEST CIVILIZATION IN EUROPE: THE MINOANS





# Describe the characteristics of Ancient Greece's geography:



# Geographic Features

1. **Sea:** heavy influence on physical environment of Greece (Aegean Sea, Ionian Sea)
2. **Mountains** (with narrow valleys): cover more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of Greece's surface area
3. **Islands:** more than 2000 islands (Crete being the largest)
4. **Climate:** winter= mild climate; summer= hot climate with rainfall from October to March = long growing season



# Effects of Geography

- **Seafaring tradition:** reliance on navy and fleets for power and protection
- **Trade & Cultural Links:** sea provided link to trade and cultural exchange with Mediterranean communities
- **Isolationism:** protection but lack of effective communication
- **Polis (independent city states):** Greece was organized into separated by seas and rugged mountains
- Emergence of **dominant** city states (Athens, Sparta)





# 3 Major Periods of Ancient Greek Civilization

## 1. Early Civilizations

Minoans (Crete) and Mycenae (mi se ne)

## 2. Classical Greece

Flourishing of arts, literature, philosophy;  
domination by Sparta and Athens

## 3. Hellenistic Age

Macedonia Empire and Alexander the  
Great



# EARLY CIVILIZATIONS

## MINOANS







# THE MINOANS

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❖ The people of ancient **Crete** we call  
**Minoans**

❖ Crete is a land of abundant agricultural  
wealth

# THE MINOANS

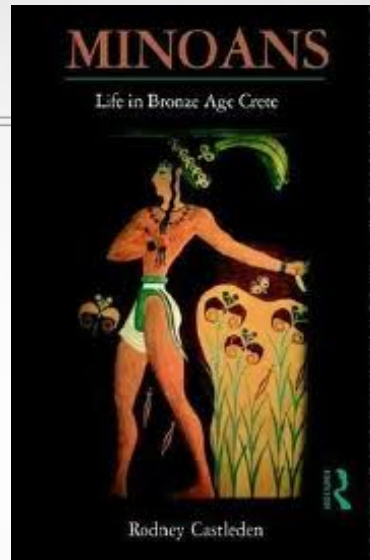
❖ By about 1900 BCE the Minoans had developed:

a	e	i	o	u
da	de	di	do	du
ya	ye		yo	yu
ka	ke	ki	ko	ku
ma	me	mi	mo	mu

A Form  
of Writing



# THE MINOANS



Palace-led  
Social  
Organization

Advanced metal  
working skills



# THE BRONZE AGE

## EARLY MINOAN (3200-2100 BCE)



Sophisticated artistic  
expression





# THE BRONZE AGE

## EARLY MINOAN (3200-2100 BCE)

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- ❖ Several new elements introduced to the culture after 3000 yrs of agriculture
- ❖ One of the most important was the use of metal to make better tools and weapons



# THE BRONZE AGE

## EARLY MINOAN (3200-2100 BCE)

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❖ The metal of greatest importance was bronze (around 3200 BCE)

❖ Bronze was great for producing sharp knives, spear points, tough saws and har chisels because of the low melting point of Bronze





# THE BRONZE AGE

## EARLY MINOAN (3200-2100 BCE)

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- ❖ How did the Minoans pay for bronze?
- ❖ All they had to trade was agricultural goods...started overproduction of food, linen and wool clothing.



# THE BRONZE AGE

## EARLY MINOAN (3200-2100 BCE)

❖ The farmers of Crete also planted olive trees to produce one of the most important staples of Mediterranean life:



# THE BRONZE AGE

## EARLY MINOAN (3200-2100 BCE)






# THE BRONZE AGE

## EARLY MINOAN (3200-2100 BCE)

❖ The agricultural process was slow, but over a thousand years, changes brought about by society with more diverse skills and occupations, some accumulated wealth, and greater contacts with people outside of Crete






# THE BRONZE AGE

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# THE BRONZE AGE

## EARLY MINOAN (3200-2100 BCE)

- ❖ Toward the end of the third millennium this development was interrupted (2300-2100 BCE)
- ❖ It is not yet understood why settlements were abandoned and trading contacts severed



# CROSS CULTURAL INFLUENCES AND THE MINOANS

❖ At the beginning of the Middle Minoan Period (2100 BCE) a recovery occurred with new population growth helped in part by



## Immigration



# CROSS CULTURAL INFLUENCES AND THE MINOANS

- ❖ Very quickly life in Crete began to flourish
- ❖ There were now sacred grounds called **sanctuaries** built on hilltops.





# CROSS CULTURAL INFLUENCES AND THE MINOANS

❖ This was where temples, sacrificial altars and other architectural fixtures were built to honor the Gods





# POLITICS AND THE PALACES





# POLITICS AND THE PALACES

- ❖ The largest and most important palace on Crete was always at Knossos
- ❖ Knossos was the center for power on Crete



# POLITICS AND THE PALACES

- ❖ Ruling class would live here
- ❖ Power was partly exercised by controlling certain goods and products (palace was the center for trade)





# POLITICS AND THE PALACES

❖ The large storerooms for agricultural produce and for items of prestige are evidence of the role of the palace on the local economy



# POLITICS AND THE PALACES

❖ All of the palaces were  
destroyed around 1750 BCE  
because of an earthquake





# EXTERNAL FORCES

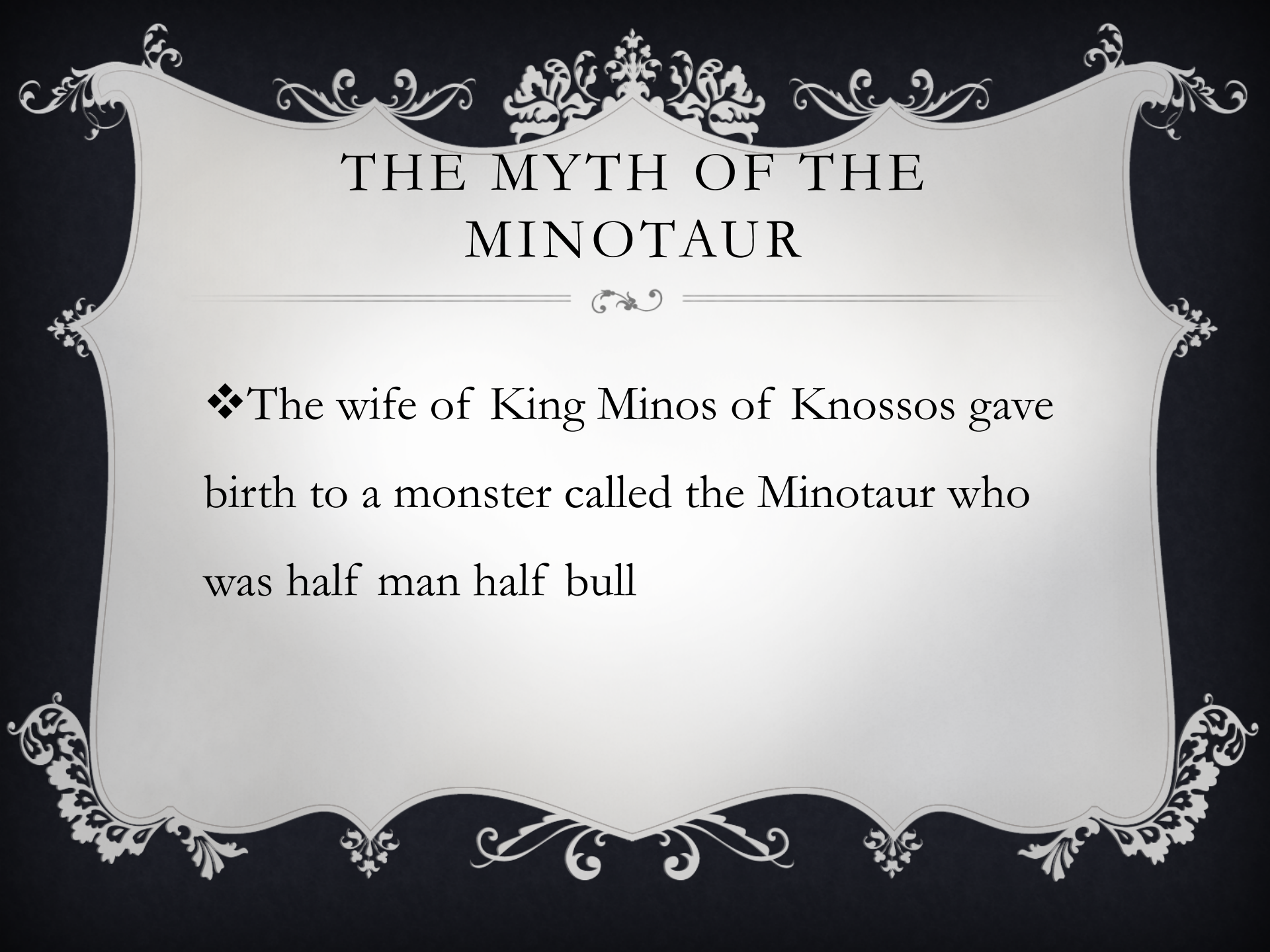
- ❖ New palaces rebuilt almost immediately....why?
- ❖ Then around 1490 BCE the palaces were destroyed (except for the one at Knossos)
- ❖ This was probably from the Mycenaean warriors that began to arrive on Crete



# Enter the Mycenaeans c. 1700 – 600 BCE

- 1490 BCE- Minoan palaces had been rebuilt however all were destroyed except at Knossos by Mycenaean warriors
- Mycenaeans took control of Crete at Knossos by 1500 BCE
- Mycenaeans controlled **mainland Greece** = main political centre was Mycenae
- More interested in war as pottery and grave sites reflect hunting, weapons, armour and war as well as fortified palace walls
- Developed **Linear B**
- Slowly Minoan culture and traditions disappeared

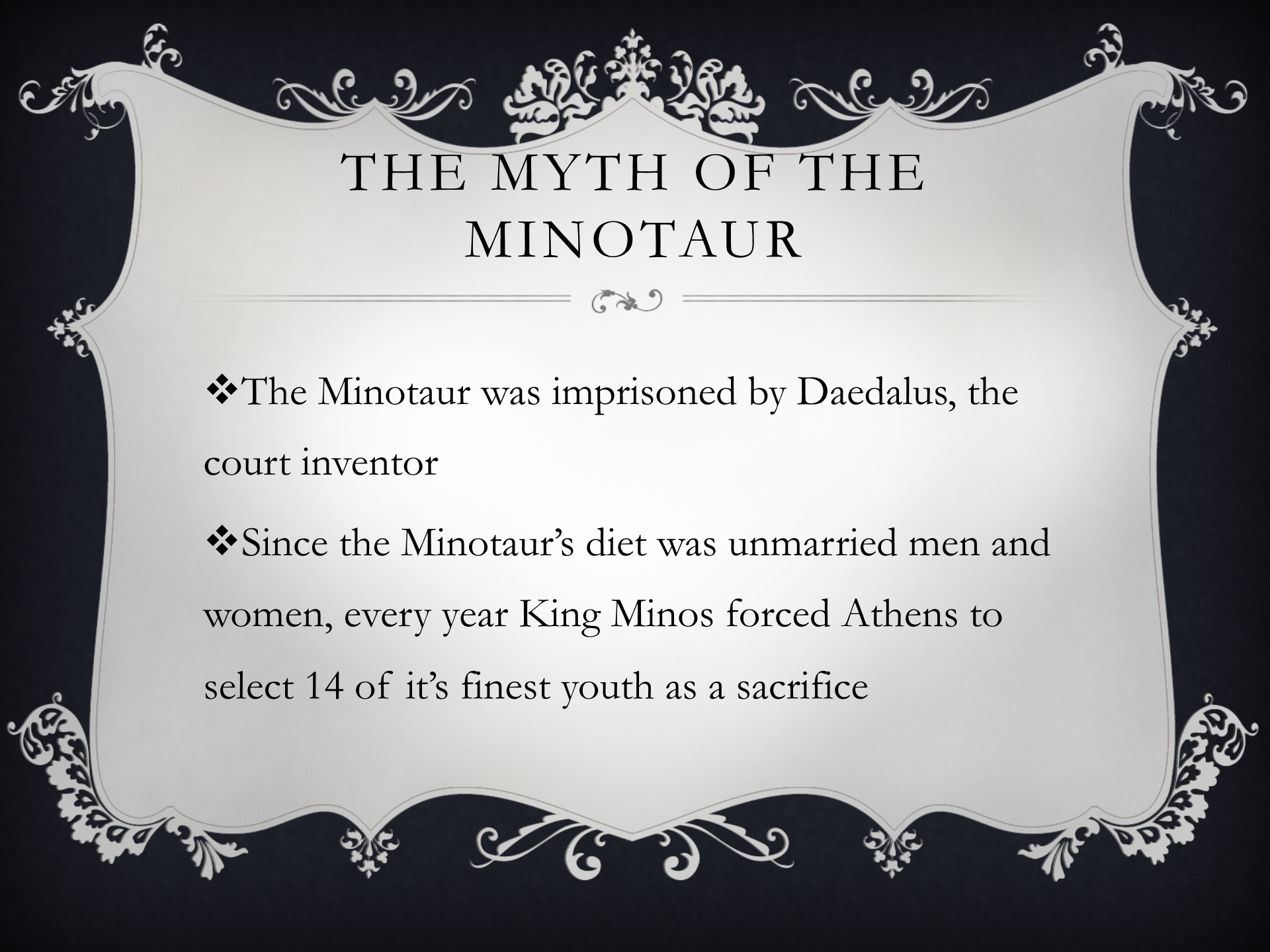




# THE MYTH OF THE MINOTAUR

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❖ The wife of King Minos of Knossos gave birth to a monster called the Minotaur who was half man half bull

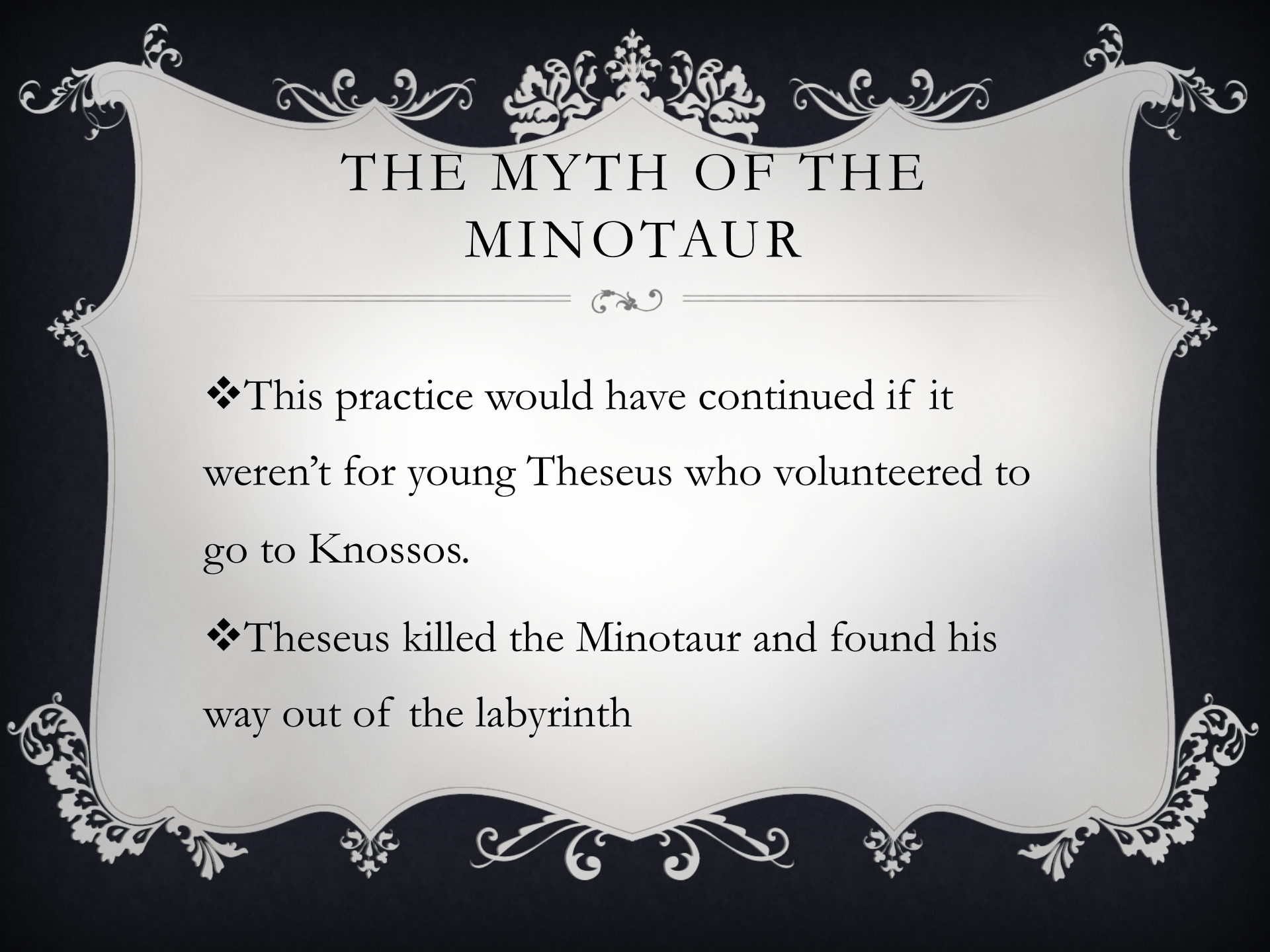


# THE MYTH OF THE MINOTAUR

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- ❖ The Minotaur was imprisoned by Daedalus, the court inventor
- ❖ Since the Minotaur's diet was unmarried men and women, every year King Minos forced Athens to select 14 of its finest youth as a sacrifice





# THE MYTH OF THE MINOTAUR

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❖ This practice would have continued if it weren't for young Theseus who volunteered to go to Knossos.

❖ Theseus killed the Minotaur and found his way out of the labyrinth

# THEORIES FOR DECLINE OF MINOANS

- 1750 BCE- earthquake destroys Minoan palaces
- 1628 BCE- volcano erupts at Thera
- 1400 BCE- War between Minoans and Myceneans led to decline of power

